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## **Community prioritizes specific projects in Our Valley survey**

WENATCHEE — Residents in Chelan and Douglas counties want the community to collaborate more, find ways to build more affordable housing, and capitalize on outdoor recreation as a way to attract business, according to a new survey conducted by the Our Valley What's Next visioning and planning initiative.

Other specific actions identified as top priorities by the community in the Our Valley survey:

- Create more quality jobs in the region; establish a research institute, technology institute or four-year university; boost career and technical education offerings; connect young people with employers.
- Redevelop the Columbia River waterfront and revitalize south Wenatchee; upgrade sidewalks and lighting in urban locations lacking such services.
- Enact regional comprehensive land-use planning; encourage mixed-use planning and higher density development in designated urban locations.
- Expand airline service at Pangborn Memorial Airport.
- Strengthen programs and services that tackle homelessness and poverty.
- Expand makerspaces, STEM programs, and arts and cultural festivals; renovate the Wenatchee Public Library.
- Support the pursuit of U.S. citizenship among immigrants; and promote increased civic discourse and participation in the region.

— Create a regional parks and trails authority and an interconnected regional trails network; preserve open spaces for their scenic, recreational and wildlife values.

— Build a water park and indoor-outdoor aquatics facility.

— Reduce the threat of wildfires in the region by improving the health of forests and foothills.

The survey is the second that Our Valley What's Next has conducted since it formed in 2015 as a way to help sustain and revitalize the region. Last fall, Our Valley surveyed more than 1,550 residents about what they value most about the region, along with what they consider to be the region's biggest strengths, weaknesses and challenges. That information was used to craft an initial list of 133 action items, which formed the basis for the latest survey.

"Interestingly, the action items that emerged from the top themes from last year's survey received the most votes in this summer's survey," said Steve Maher, Our Valley project coordinator. "It validates what we heard a year ago and shows we are truly on the right path when it comes to what the entire community is seeking from its leaders."

Maher said Our Valley will be utilizing the survey results — both from this year and last year — to help finalize its first Action Plan, which is set for release this fall. The Action Plan will include action items and major projects, lead partners who have committed to seeing those action items and projects to completion, and timelines. The major projects are currently being vetted by a community think tank.

Our Valley What's Next is overseen by a steering committee that includes representatives from the business community, government agencies and nonprofit organizations. The effort is the first time community planning and development has been undertaken across multi-jurisdictional boundaries in Chelan and Douglas counties. The name, Our Valley, was intentionally chosen to reflect this collaborative approach.

More than 500 residents participated in the latest survey, with about two-thirds casting votes online and one-third doing so at a public open house. The survey was conducted from late June through early August and was broken into six parts — one for each of six focus areas. For each focus area, survey respondents were asked to choose four action items that they believe are the highest priority for the community.

Here is a look at the action items ranked as the highest priorities by the community in each of the six focus areas (for the complete survey results, as well as the results of last year's survey work, visit [www.ourvalleywhatsnext.com](http://www.ourvalleywhatsnext.com)):

## **How We Prosper (economy, jobs, economic development)**

**1. Outdoor Recreation Destination:** Capitalize on the region's outdoor recreation resources as a way to attract businesses, professionals and tourists.

**2. Quality Jobs:** Promote and pursue creation of more quality job wages and salaries in the area.

- 3. A Four-Year University or Research Institute:** Develop a local institution of higher education to help set up Our Valley for the future economy and to instill a value of education in the region.
- 4. Career and Technical Education Programs:** Work with local K-12 schools, Wenatchee Valley College, job training programs and other organizations to expand and strengthen career and technical education opportunities.
- 5. Expanded Medical Sector:** Expand the medical facilities, including adding a teaching hospital, and related businesses and ancillary and support services.
- 6. High Wage Employment Opportunities:** Synergize development of high-wage employment opportunities that capitalize on Our Valley's resources and quality of life.
- 7. Small Town Feel:** Promote Our Valley's small-town feel through good planning, marketing and tourism, community events and local volunteer programs.
- 8. Food- and Agriculture-Related Tourism:** Develop our valley's orchards, farms vineyards and wineries, craft breweries and cider houses, farmers markets and related attractions as a major tourism opportunity.
- 9. Wine/Craft Beer/Cannabis/Cider Industries:** Grow, market and recruit value-added agriculture businesses to take advantage of locally grown products.
- 10. (tie) Tree Fruit Investment & R&D:** Expand Our Valley's status as the investment and research and development center for the tree fruit industry.
- 10. (tie) Local Venture Capital:** Develop venture capital funds to support the development of outdoor recreation, technology and other emerging businesses.

### **How We Plan and Grow (land use, transportation, growth, development)**

- 1. (tie) Incentives for Affordable Housing:** Offer tax breaks and other incentives to builders and property owners to develop more affordable housing for middle- and lower-income earners.
- 1. (tie) South Wenatchee Improvements:** Implement major planned improvements of South Wenatchee neighborhoods and business districts.
- 3. Expanded Airline Service:** Expand airline carriers and service at Pangborn Memorial Airport, including direct flights to other cities besides Seattle.
- 4. Mixed-Use Planning:** Encourage mixed-use planning region wide, emphasizing higher density, pedestrian- and transit-friendly development in designated urban centers that is coordinated with regional transportation planning.
- 5. (tie) Riverfront Redevelopment:** Promote riverfront development on both sides of the Columbia River, including housing, shops, entertainment, and a large marina.

**5. (tie) Bike Lanes and Bike Trails:** Develop more bike lanes and bike trails throughout Our Valley.

**7. Our Valley I-90 Link:** Develop a four-lane highway linking Our Valley and Interstate 90.

**8. Restaurants and Retail Development:** Encourage and support a mix of restaurants and retail shops to elevate the experience in the area's urban centers.

**9. Downtown Residential:** Promote and incentivize residential development in downtown urban centers.

**10. (tie) Identify Regulatory Barriers Affecting Affordable Housing:** Review development regulations to identify barriers to affordable housing and propose alternatives.

**10. (tie) Corridor Beautification:** Beautify urban corridors, including city/town entry points throughout Our Valley.

## **How We Sustain Our Environment (environment, outdoor recreation, natural resources)**

**1. Regional Interconnected Trails Network:** Develop an interconnected trail network between the urban hub of Wenatchee-East Wenatchee, the Cascade Foothills and outlying communities.

**2. Regional Parks and Trails Authority:** Create a regional parks and trails authority for Our Valley to gain more efficiency, cost-savings and cohesion among multiple jurisdictions now involved in the development, management and maintenance of parks and trails.

**3. (tie) Healthy Forests and Wildland-Urban Interface:** Improve efforts to keep our forests and wildland-urban interface healthy to reduce the threat of wildfires.

**3. (tie) Open Space Preservation:** Preserve Our Valley's open spaces for their scenic and recreational values, and their diversity of native plants and wildlife.

**5. Indoor/Outdoor Aquatics Facility:** Develop a large indoor/outdoor aquatics facility.

**6. Climate-Sensitive Water Use:** Improve water conservation and management practices in Our Valley – for fish, agriculture, municipal uses and individuals – to address a changing climate and its environmental impacts.

**7. Trailhead Parking and Restrooms:** Develop more trailheads with restrooms and adequate parking for the Foothills Trails area.

**8. Develop long-term wildfire recovery organization:** Develop strategies to mitigate damage from summer wildfires and smoke. Foster a fire adoptive community. Be proactive in fire management. Increase awareness and education.

**9. (tie) Recreational Stewardship of Open Space and Natural Habitat:** Develop programs to encourage and support stewardship among recreational users in Our Valley, minimizing impacts on our open spaces and natural habitat as public use of these resources intensifies.

**9. (tie) Orchard Preservation:** Develop strategies to slow and reverse the loss of our orchard businesses.

## **How We Live and Care For One Another (people, community, health, safety)**

**1. Homelessness Programs:** Develop more effective programs, services and resources for the region's homeless populations, including transitional housing.

**2. Sidewalks and Street Lighting:** Upgrade sidewalks and street lighting in South Wenatchee and East Wenatchee, promoting safe, convenient pedestrian mobility and places for people to congregate.

**3. Youth Job Opportunities:** Support initiatives that help local businesses connect young people with the world of work, including local employment options, needs and opportunities.

**4. Water Park:** Plan for and build a water park, with slides and other activities for locals and visitors. Having a water park would encourage youth and family activities in our community and create a draw for tourists.

**5. Poverty Reduction:** Strengthen regional programs to address the causes and symptoms of poverty, especially as it impacts families and children.

**6. Activities for Young Adults:** Support and encourage increasing entertainment options, events and nightlife to attract and retain young adults.

**7. (tie) Year-Round and After-Hours Activities for Families and Children:** Create an inventory of what is currently available in our community in these areas and research what other communities are doing successfully.

**7. (tie) Options to Violence:** Promote alternative solutions to violence-related incidents and issues, enhancing available mental health services.

**9. Hear the Voice of Poverty:** Promote greater community understanding of the impacts of poverty, including focus groups for people without homes and people living in poverty.

**10. Reducing Drug Use:** Reduce the incidence of methamphetamine and heroin use in the area, focusing on treatment and counseling.

## **How We Learn and Create (education, life-long learning, arts and culture)**

**1. Museum/Library Based Makers/Hands-on Programming:** To expand and make sustainable current makerspace programs, as well as to secure funding and qualified volunteers to run quality programs.

**2. Technology Institute:** Establish a technology institute to provide technical training and career pathways for high school students not on an associate degree or four-year track.

**3. Modernize the Wenatchee Public Library:** Renovate or rebuild the Wenatchee Public Library to meet the growing needs of Our Valley, specifically through technology, education, and community meeting space.

**4. Arts, Music, Food and Cultural Festivals and Events:** Expand arts, food and music festivals in the region – including a showcase for Latino culture — to complement the growing number of outdoor sports events.

**5. STEM Programs:** Develop top-level STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) programs in the region.

**6. New School Facilities:** Finance and construct new school facilities incorporating state-of-the-art programs and technology in needed locations to meet the demands of a growing population.

**7. Teaching/Research Hospital:** Plan and promote the evolution of Confluence Health into a major teaching and research hospital serving North Central Washington and beyond.

**8. Local Business and Classroom Connections:** Foster stronger connections between local businesses and classrooms, creating more opportunities for students to experience real world application of classroom learning.

**9. Workforce Needs Assessment:** Complete a workforce needs assessment with the major employers in Our Valley that will guide our school districts and higher education institutions in developing programs to educate and train students to meet those workforce needs.

**10. Intergenerational Education Opportunities:** Create stronger connections between the very young and elderly, including opportunities for preschool and daycare children to visit and interact with residents of local retirement centers, and for high-school students to help older public library patrons with tech issues.

## **How We Participate and Decide (governance, engagement, decision-making)**

**1. Immigrant Citizenship:** Support and promote the pursuit of U.S. citizenship among immigrants in the region, encouraging their pursuit of civic education and active participation in local democracy.

**2. Constructive Civic Dialogue:** Promote increased civic discourse and participation in the region. Target more youth involvement and training for leaders and the community at large, including governmental decision-making and public meetings, by leveraging existing structures, opportunities and community celebrations.

**3. (tie) More Partnerships:** Facilitate growing partnerships between urban government and community leaders and citizens, focusing on the goal of promoting greater collaboration between municipalities, including policies, plans, programs and services.

**3. (tie) Comprehensive Planning:** Assist agencies to meet as a unified body to determine appropriate regional land-use planning and zoning for Our Valley.

**3. (tie) Consolidation of Public Institutions:** Merge local governments, public agencies, and other public institutions where duplication of purpose exists and greater efficiencies can be achieved through consolidation or integration of functions.

**6. Evaluate Opportunities to Consolidate:** Build on the success of combined fire service, and evaluate all services being provided by adjacent jurisdictions for opportunities to consolidate (i.e. police, fire, water, etc.)

**7. Town Hall Series:** Bring a Town Hall Series to the community that stretches our minds and imaginations around the different structures, systems and issues that do and could support our civic lives.

**8. Plan Multicultural Activities:** Enhance and diversify the multicultural opportunities for involvement of the community into existing community celebrations.

**9. Culturally Competent Leadership:** Educate local political and community leaders around issues of cultural diversity and competency to better reflect and serve a diversifying population.

**10. Law Enforcement:** Begin the discussion of evaluating the merger and/or collaboration of law enforcement agencies to reduce costs, improve the efficiency and provision of service.

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